CLAIMS

1. A framework for communicating between central message exchange server and one or more heterogeneous external data sources, comprising:

an adapter engine comprising one or more adapters, wherein each adapter is configured to connect, via messaging, an external data source operating using a native message format and the central message exchange server using an extensible markup language (XML) messaging format.

2. The framework in accordance with claim 1, wherein the one or more adapters include an inbound adapter configured to receive a message from the external data source in the native message format, extract data from the message and provide the data in an XML message to the central message exchange server.

3. The framework in accordance with claim 1, wherein the one or more adapters include an outbound adapter configured to receive data in an XML message from the central message exchange server, extract the data from the XML message, and send the data to the external data source in the native message format.

4. The framework in accordance with claim 1, wherein the external data source and the central message exchange server communicate via a hypertext transport protocol (HTTP).

5. The framework in accordance with claim 1, wherein the central message exchange server operates using a simple object access protocol (SOAP).

6. The framework in accordance with claim 2, wherein the external data source includes a sending application.

7. The framework in accordance with claim 1, wherein each adapter includes an inbound and outbound adapter pair, wherein the inbound adapter is configured to receive a message from the external data source in the native message format, extract data from the

message and provide the data in an XML message to the central message exchange server, and wherein the outbound adapter is configured to receive data in an XML message from the central message exchange server, extract the data from the XML message, and send the data to the external data source in the native message format.

8. The framework in accordance with claim 1, wherein the adapter engine further includes an adapter monitor for monitoring the operation of each adapter and presenting monitoring information to a graphical user interface (GUI).

9. The framework in accordance with claim 8, further including a GUI engine for generating the GUI and displaying the monitoring information.

10. The framework in accordance with claim 8, further including an information log for logging the monitoring information.

11. The framework in accordance with claim 8, further including an identification log for logging message identifiers of each message communicated through an adapter.

12. The framework in accordance with claim 7, wherein the inbound adapter includes an HTTP client, and the outbound adapter includes an HTTP server.

13. The framework in accordance with claim 1, wherein the adapter engine includes a Java application configured to communicate via HTTP.

14. A method for communicating between central message exchange server and one or more heterogeneous external data sources, comprising:

instantiating an adapter based on a message format used by the external data source, wherein the message format is non-compliant with an extensible markup language protocol used by the central message exchange server;

connecting the external data source to the central message exchange server via the adapter; and communicating data between the external data source and the central message exchange server through the adapter.

15. The method in accordance with claim 14, wherein the adapter is an inbound adapter, and the method includes receiving data from the external data source and sending the data to the central message exchange server in an XML message.

16. The method in accordance with claim 14, wherein the adapter is an outbound adapter, and the method includes receiving data in an XML message from the central message exchange server and sending the data to the external data source in a format native to the external data source.

17. The method in accordance with claim 15, wherein the data is received from the external data source in a format native to the external data source, and sent according to an XML format used by the central message exchange server.

18. The method in accordance with claim 16, wherein the data is received in an XML format used by the central message exchange server, and sent in a format native to the external data source.

19. The method in accordance with claim 14, wherein the adapter includes an inbound/outbound adapter pair.

20. A method for communicating between central message exchange server and one or more heterogeneous external data sources, comprising:

instantiating an adapter based on a data type used by the external data source, wherein the adapter includes an inbound adapter configured to receive data from the external data source and send the data in a message to the central message exchange server, and an outbound adapter configured to receive data in a message from the central message exchange server and send the data to the external data source;

connecting the external data source to the central message exchange server via the adapter; and

communicating data between the external data source and the central message exchange server through the adapter.